

THE MARYLAND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ADVISORY COUNCIL
Minutes

November 17, 2020

Maryland Behavioral Health Advisory Council Members Present:

Barbara Allen, Robert Anderson, Dori S. Bishop, , Andrea Brown, Mary Bunch, Kenneth Collins, Kathryn Dilley, The Hon. Addie Eckardt, Ann Geddes, Kelsey Goering for Jonathan Martin, Lauren Grimes, Carlos Hardy, Dayna Harris, Joyce N. Harrison, James Hedrick, Brooke Holmes, Helene Hornum, Aliya Jones, Sylvia Lawson, Sharon M. Lipford, Michelle Livshin, Tammy Loewe, Dan Martin, The Hon. Dana Moylan Wright, Caterina Pangilinan, Luciene Parsley, Mary Pizzo, Keith Richardson, Kirsten Robb-McGrath, Jose Rosado, Jacob Salem, Erin Shaffer for Lynda Bonieskie, Sabrina Sepulveda, Jeffrey Sternlicht, Vickie Walters, Ambrosia Watts, Anita M. Wells

Maryland Behavioral Health Advisory Council Members Absent:

Makeitha Abdulbarr, Lori Brewster, Catherine Drake, Kate Farinholt, Rosanne Hanratty, Jennifer Krabill, The Hon. George Lipman, Deneice Valentine, Mary C. Vaughan, Kimberlee Watts, Kim Wireman

Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) Staff Present:

Stephanie Slowly, Steven Whitefield, Cynthia Petion, Tsegereda Assebe, Sarah Reiman, Greta Carter, Brendan Welsh, Doris Chen, Kimberly Qualls, Joy Ashcroft, Lori Mannino, Laura Burns-Heffner, Steve Reeder, Brittnii Howell, Risa Davis, Aparna Nagaraju, Phyllis McCann, James Yoe, Lillian Okomo, Kim Jones, Mary Viggiani, Michelle Darling, Natalee Solomon, Adon Cherry-Bey

Guests:

Diana Seybolt, University of Maryland, Systems Evaluation Center

Leah Parrack, SUN Behavioral Health

Bernice Hutchinson, Maryland Department of Aging

Nancy Rosen-Cohen, NCADD-MD

Mary Drexler, Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling

Jacquelyn Pettis, Optum Maryland

Annie Coble, Johns Hopkins University and Medicine

Judith Schlott

Deborah Steinberg

Elouise Mayne

Valentina Grinberg

Pamela Llewelyn

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Barbara Allen, Co-Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed all members and guests. This is the last meeting of the calendar year 2020. Co-chairs Lauren Grimes and Barbara Allen reviewed logistics for conducting the meeting virtually, including the use of the camera option, muting phones (*6 to mute and *6 to unmute), joining by either phone or Google Meet but not both due to the chance of interference, and how to pin the interpreters if needed. Those who participated by phone were asked to email Greta Carter so that their attendance is recorded. Barbara introduced the Q&A option on Google Meet to submit questions. The chat will be used for technical difficulties.

Vickie Walters was introduced as the new MATOD representative.

Lauren provided updates on the status of the BHAC consumer seat and open youth positions. Tsegereda introduced a new BHA staff member, Doris Chen. She will be supporting the Division of Planning and BHAC. BHAC committee co-chairs are sending out reminders that they are looking for new members, especially the Planning Committee. If anyone is interested, they can get in touch with Barbara and Lauren, and they will get them in touch with the co-chairs.

Minutes from the September BHAC meeting were reviewed. Members did not have any updates, and the minutes were approved. Approved minutes will be posted on the Behavioral Health Administration's website at: [Maryland Behavioral Health Advisory Council](#)

THE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Aliya Jones, M.D., MBA, Deputy Secretary Behavioral Health

- **COVID-19**

Dr. Jones reminded everyone of the Governor's recent announcements regarding the increase in COVID-19 cases and implementation of previous restrictions. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our mental health, and it is vital that remain vigilant to address this exacerbated mental distress, which can contribute to thoughts of suicide. BHA is reviewing current CY19-20 suicide death data received from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) and the Vital Statistics Administration on a monthly basis. Dr. Jones shared that Maryland's suicide rates have not increased and are approximately 13-14% below what we were experiencing this time last year. We are continuing to monitor the number of calls to the Maryland Crisis Hotline (211, Press 1). Over the past few months (March - October) we have seen a 30% increase in the number of calls when compared to the same period in 2019. 6% of those calls were related to COVID-19.

- **MDMindHealth**

MDMindHealth is an evidence-based intervention to decrease risk of suicide ideation. This BHA-sponsored texting program through Maryland's 211 crisis helpline has been well-received but more can sign up. 289 people have signed up for this platform and 36 people have reached out for additional help. By texting "MDMindHealth" to 898211, individuals can opt-in to receive caring messages to help them stay connected and improve mental wellness.

- **OLDER ADULT BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WORKGROUP**

More recently, BHA initiated an interagency workgroup focused on older adult behavioral health. Available data indicates an increase in suicide deaths, emergency department visits related to suicidal ideation, and unintentional overdoses in Marylanders over age 65 in recent years. These trends may worsen due increased stress, anxiety, and isolation resulting from the pandemic. Stefani O'Dea can provide more specifics for those interested.

- **BHA/MEDCHI BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WEBINAR SERIES**

The BHA/MedChi webinar series started on October 29, 2020. These webinars are for the healthcare provider workforce to help them manage their own stress during this challenging time. The first webinar had 200 people signed up, and the second webinar had 400 people. The next webinar is scheduled for December 3. If anyone has questions, Dr. Whitefield can provide more information. This is a free webinar that provides CME/CNU credits.

- **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDER WEBINAR**

Additionally, the Behavioral Health Provider webinar series will continue every Friday as scheduled, as well as the webinar with MD Primary Care scheduled on Wednesday evenings.

- **BHA PARTNER LETTER**

As Dr. Jones mentioned in the monthly partner letter, BHA is analyzing the impact of COVID-19 and unemployment on deaths of despair in Maryland (substance misuse related deaths and suicide). In 2020, deaths of despair are projected to be 5.4% higher than they were in 2018, and 9.5% higher than they were in 2019. We are starting to see this in increases of opioid overdoses.

- **PROTOCOL FOR STAFF REPORTING OF COVID-19**

BHA developed a protocol and reporting form to report positive client and staff COVID-19 test results, designated only for high touch environments (opioid treatment programs (OTP) and residential/congregate living facilities). Dr. Jones reminded everyone about the importance of utilizing these forms so that the BHA, as well as the Local Behavioral Health Authorities, are aware of these cases and actions being taken.

- **SOR II AND SOR NO COST EXTENSION GRANT AWARDS**

These awards are being processed. Dr. Jones gave her appreciation for work from Marion Katersereles and her team, program managers and division directors for their work related to this funding, and the activities moving forward that will enhance our prevention and intervention efforts.

- **MARYLAND CRISIS MODEL**

This model will guide how we render crisis services systems and provide strategies for implementation and program evaluation, which will be rooted in EBPs to meet the needs of

those with behavioral health disorders. Dr. Jones sends her appreciation for those who will participate in a 'stakeholder' workgroup in an advisory capacity to guide us in its development and implementation.

- **PSYCHIATRIC REHABILITATION PROGRAM (PRP) WORKGROUP**

Since our last update, the workgroup pulled PRP service utilization data to examine PRP service by fiscal year, jurisdiction, and associated expenditures. The PRP Data sub-workgroup is working on finalizing metrics and data sources for a baseline data exploration to monitor and determine the efficacy of the treatment service. The report will be made public in the near future. Angela Omine is taking the lead on this and can address any specific questions.

- **PROJECT AWARE-SEA**

The Child and Young Adult Group has been partnering with the Maryland State Department of Education on the Project AWARE-SEA grant to support the creation of additional programs that will help promote the healthy mental health of school-aged youth. We recently began a small pilot with the consumer quality teams (CQT) to include visits and surveys at child and adolescent PRP sites. Dr. Rodowski-Stanco can provide more details on that collaboration.

- **OPIOID OVERDOSE DEATHS**

Opioid overdose deaths continue to increase in Maryland. Deaths for the first half of 2020 were up by 11% compared to the same period in 2019. Third quarter data, while preliminary, continues to track substantially higher than the 2018 and 2019 numbers. BHA projections indicate that the number of deaths is on pace to surpass 2018 numbers over the next month and end the year 13% higher than 2018.

- **BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EQUITY**

This work will be guided by the latest guidelines and recommendations in the Cultural and Linguistic Competency Strategic Plan. Stephanie Slowly is guiding this work and she can provide more details and answer any questions. She will be expanding this workgroup in the coming weeks to include our stakeholder community.

Dr. Jones will be speaking at the annual health equity conference on December 3. She encourages anyone who is interested in this topic to participate in the conference.

- **OPTUM**

The Department has been requested to provide an ASO presentation before the House and Senate Committees this week. Dr. Jones has met with a number of our providers and provider groups to learn about their specific issues, and we continue to work with Medicaid to try to resolve those issues.

- **BHA 2020-2021 STATE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PLAN**

Dr. Jones thanked everyone for their contributions to the development of the BHA Plan. We will continue to follow this plan and keep everyone updated of our progress.

Questions:

Lauren Grimes – When will the Maryland suicide data be made public and shareable?

Dr. Jones – Unfortunately the data comes out about a year after it has been compiled. There is a 2019 report that will be coming out soon. The 2020 data will be available around this time next year. The preliminary data for 2020 shows that we are 13-14% lower than where we were this time last year.

Anita Wells – Dr. Jones noted an upcoming meeting regarding Health Equity. Could we hear the date/time and any other available information regarding how to participate?

Kimberly Jones posted in the chat box:

Registration for the MHHD Health Equity Conference is available at

https://events.egov.com/eventreg/MD/registant.htm?action=new&_event=17thannualmarylandhealthequityconference

Anita Wells – Is the best way to expand and participate in the Health Equity committee to reach out to Stephanie?

Dr. Jones – Yes. Send her an email. There is wonderful work and commitment that the staff has for these issues. We are looking to partner with anyone who is able to help us make improvements in this particular area.

Barbara (closing):

Barbara noted that there is a lot of work going on. She thanked Dr. Jones for all the updates. There are so many trainings and webinars to take advantage of.

PRESENTATION – Ask the Question Campaign, Joy Ashcraft, LMSW, Director, Maryland’s Commitment to Veterans, MDH/BHA

Joy shared a PowerPoint presentation titled: Governor’s Challenge & Ask the Question Campaign

- The Mission
 - The governor’s challenge to prevent suicide among service members, veterans and their families (SMVF) is a partnership between Veterans Affairs and SAMHSA. This has been ongoing since 2018.
 - Maryland is 1 of 20 states participating in the Governor’s Challenge. This gives us access to trainings and subject matter experts in the field to build a statewide suicide plan for the SMVF population
 - We were mandated in 2019 to develop this plan through SB521.
 - Maryland has a large population of military and veterans, despite being a small state. There are over 385,000 veterans in the state and representation from all five branches of the military, guard, reserve, and their families.
- Focus of Plan
 - 4 priority areas but we focused on “Identify SMVF and screen for suicide risk”.
 - A challenge with the veteran population is that not all who have served will identify as veterans. They may not meet the VA definition of a veteran. For example, female veterans may not consider themselves as veterans due to the time they served. Veterans who served during peacetime may not identify as veterans b/c they served during peacetime.
 - Other priority areas:
 - Promote connectedness and improve care transitions
 - Increase lethal means safety and safety planning
 - Expand and specialize peer to peer service coordination
 - We are looking at developing a service member veteran family specialty peer training.
- Maryland’s “Ask the Question” Campaign
 - The best practice is to ask “Have you or a loved one ever served in the military?”
- Phase I: Awareness building and education
 - Social media
 - Providing education and military culture online training
 - A full day culture training was offered last week.
- Phase II: Question is incorporated into intake processes
 - Time frame: anticipating around May

- The group will be looking at points of entry within several state agencies, such as state police, human services, corrections, disability, aging, and libraries. They're looking at where they might come into contact with SMVF.
- This will allow better service delivery, and staff can be educated on the resources and programs available to promote wellbeing and connectedness in this population.

Joy and her group briefed the Lt. Governor and other key members on 11/13/2020. She shared a logo and infographic card that the team has developed for this campaign. The group will develop a guide with resources that the public can utilize.

Joy shared a PSA from the Governor on the Ask the Question Campaign. The Maryland National Guard has also put together another PSA.

Questions:

Barbara Allen – The new logo is great. Where can peers get more information and call for more data?

Joy Ashcraft– The Ask the Question Campaign is the first part of the launch. The peer program is something that we are currently working on and will be submitted to the legislature in the spring for review and approval. We are not quite there on putting the word out on what trainings are available and how to access it.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION UPDATE/STATUS – Senator Adelaide Eckardt

Given the situation with the General Assembly and COVID-19, we asked Senator Eckardt to give us an overview of what will happen this year.

Operations:

The House and the Senate have very different plans, but they will be going back into session. The Senate will not have Monday night sessions. The first order of business is the budget. Committee meetings will likely be Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Sessions will be Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Plexi-glass will be used to protect members. Environmental health and infectious disease control experts have been consulted to provide guidance on how to safely design and navigate the Senate Chambers. There will be deep cleaning going on throughout the day. Most of decision making will be made on the Floor. Committee work will be done via Zoom.

Positive COVID-19 members will be able to access via Zoom. If there is an outbreak, they take a pause. Limited access from the public and is by appointment only. Members may only have two consistent staff. Interns and ancillary staff will be operating from home via telecommunication.

The House has been divided into the two big rooms in the House Office Building. Some people will be on the Floor, and others will be in the old Committee rooms. No receptions or meal related activities will be permitted. It will be slower paced for the first month.

Legislative Preview:

All members have been asked to develop their legislative packages early.

Senator Eckardt gave BHAC members a preview of her initiatives for the new session, including:

- Maryland Suicide Fatality Review Committee
- Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Telemedicine – Psychiatric Nurse Practitioners and Psychiatrists
- Task Force to Study Access to Mental Health Care in Higher Education

Senator Eckardt noted that many of these initiatives may or may not convert to legislation. She foresees that the session will be focused on dealing with budget, addressing priority items from last year's shortened session, and addressing COVID-19 related issues. Senator Eckardt is a part of many commissions, and those commissions are providing reports, some of which could turn into legislative initiatives. She suggested members go on Commission websites and access those reports if they are interested. Work on Optum issues and the community care delivery system are ongoing.

Questions:

Lauren Grimes – Senator Eckhardt, are you able to share any additional information about how virtual testimony will work this session in both the House and Senate this session?

Senator Eckardt-- Maryland has really prided itself in having full access to the public. Sometimes there's a lot of redundancy in testimony. She will remind folks to have a balanced perspective. We need testimonies from as many people as possible. There will be decisions made on time allotment and the number of people that can be accommodated. There will be personal contact with the legislators by appointment only. There will be many safety measures while preserving integrity of what is in the Maryland constitution.

Barbara Allen- One of the things that has been discussed is that there will be a limit of 4 people testifying on the pro side and 4 people on the con side of a piece of legislation. Will there be details on the legislative website?

Senator Eckardt—We have already signed up who we want carrying on case. Last year, we couldn't see testimony on all the bills. We only got paper copies of what was submitted. We can have many discussions on zoom. Her understanding is that there will be some limits. It will be a more focused session. Many are concerned about the 4% provider increase that has been promised for years. Most in the General Assembly are supportive of that. It has been her priority and the priority of many organized groups.

There is a plan that will be made public. Greta will share Senator Eckardt's health initiatives with the BHAC members.

COUNCIL BUSINESS:

BHAC Annual Report— Sarah Reiman

The annual report was submitted to the Office of Government Affairs and Communication. They will review it and send it to the department and then to the governor. We will provide the

Council with a copy to review and will share the edited copy from the Office of Government Affairs.

Co-Chair Election – 2021- Barbara Allen

Last year, Lauren Grimes came on as the co-chair. Barbara's term is coming to an end. We will be reinstituting the nomination committee and we will be looking for a new co-chair. Barbara has one more year on the Council. She will be focusing on the Recovery Services and Support work.

Lauren Grimes gave her thanks to Barbara and her work as a co-chair.

Questions:

Jose Rosado – Have all the subcommittees been meeting regularly? A recent new job made some meeting invites get lost in the shuffle & want to make sure I haven't been missing anything.

Barbara Allen – It varies. Some committees have had some time apart because of COVID-19. Anyone who wants to join a committee is welcome.

COMMITTEE REPORT OUTS

Planning Committee: The Committee met regularly this year. We reviewed the draft plan and reviewed the request for funding to the federal level. We reviewed the plans and evaluations and made recommendations to SAMHSA.

Criminal Justice/Forensic Committee: No one was available to report for this committee. They will report at the January meeting.

Children, Young Adults, and Families Committee: The Committee met shortly after the last BHAC meeting and will be meeting after today's meeting. We continue to focus on the expansion of crisis services for children and adolescents. There is a model that is being piloted on the Eastern Shore, and we will be looking to expand that. We are working on adolescent substance use treatment for those with more serious problems.

Recovery Services and Support Committee: This Committee has been working for years. This committee has struggled with membership and focus. Today, there is a distribution list of about 30 people. It is a varied committee in terms of representation. There are three documents for everyone to understand what the group is working on. There was a document made in February listing all the issues and areas of concern that had been discussed over the previous year. The most recent meeting was November 2. Under NCADD, Carlos put together a town hall for recovery houses, and there is a report from that event. We are establishing priorities and a plan for recovery housing.

Cultural and Linguistic Competency Committee: Today we will have the first review of the CLC plan. There will be a presentation on the Mid Shore plan. We will provide feedback on their CLC plan. We will be picking the next CLC plans to review them consistently at the Committee meetings.

Other updates:

Barbara Allen –

At the end of October, we held a First Responders Appreciation Day in Howard County. We brought together the police department, fire and rescue, the sheriff's office, detention center, and the state attorney's office. We presented certificates of appreciation for leads to take to their staff. The Deputy Fire Chief took the plaques to the station and expressed his appreciation.

Cynthia Petion –

BHA, in collaboration with the Mental Health Institution of Maryland, is partnering with the Maryland Institute of Emergency Services to provide mental health first aid training for first responders. October 22 was the first training. It will be a two-year project. We are looking at first responders to be able to identify the risk factors for individuals with substance use disorders. We are looking forward to furthering this partnership.

The next Behavioral Health Advisory Council Meeting is January 19, 2021.